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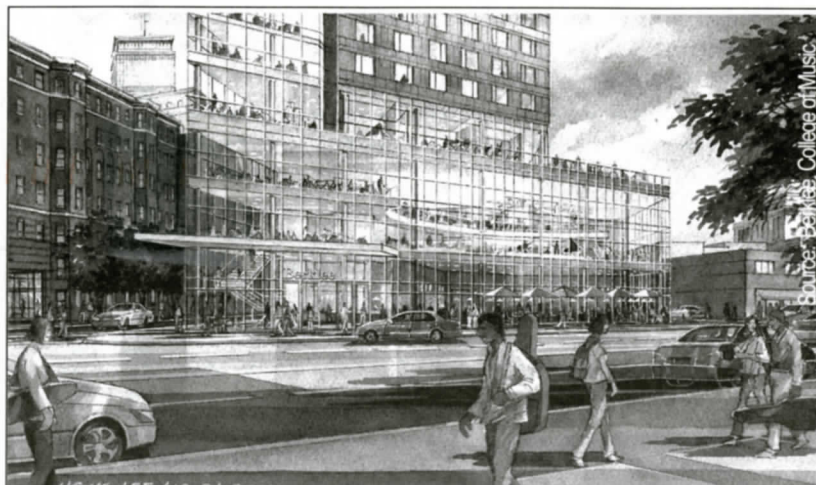
The newsletter for people who care about Boston

Fall 2010

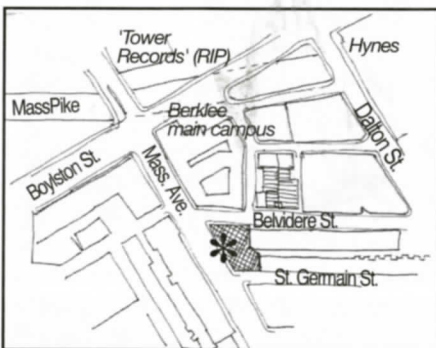
Boston is Starting to Stir...

Berklee College of Music—Berklee College of Music keeps plugging away at developing a plan for its future. Since 2006, Berklee has worked with the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and a community task force to evaluate ways to meet Master Plan goals for housing one-half of its students and meeting the unique needs of musician-students. Berklee's recent proposal is for a \$65 million four-story, glass, mixed-use building to be built on the site of a one-story building at 168

Massachusetts Ave. at the corner of Belvidere and St. Germain streets. The building would include 350 beds, dining hall, student performance venue, teaching studio



Berklee College's proposed four-story dormitory-performance venue-classroom building at 168 Mass. Ave.



and classrooms. In contrast to the existing non-descript building, the new Berklee building will be mostly glass with ground-floor retail, 20-foot sidewalks and a green roof. The BRA has not approved the proposed project. Architect: William Rawn Associates.

Downtown Boston BID—Although common in other cities in Massachusetts, Boston's first Business Improvement District (BID) was approved by the Boston City Council in August 2010 after years of debate.

The Downtown Boston BID creates a voluntary fee structure on commercial property owners in the district to generate mon-

ey to improve cleanliness, aesthetics, safety and maintenance beyond the services already provided by the City. The ultimate goal is to enhance and promote the shopping area to shoppers, tourists, workers, etc.

Initially conceived as the "Downtown Crossing BID" to revitalize the failing retail district, the BID was expanded to a "Downtown Boston BID" to increase revenue by including commercial and financial property owners. The area now in the BID is roughly a triangle bounded by Essex, Congress and Tremont streets (see map). By contrast, Downtown Crossing—originally called Washington Mall when it opened in 1978—is generally considered to be the shopping streets clustered around the pedestrian-only streets (Washington, Summer and Winter).

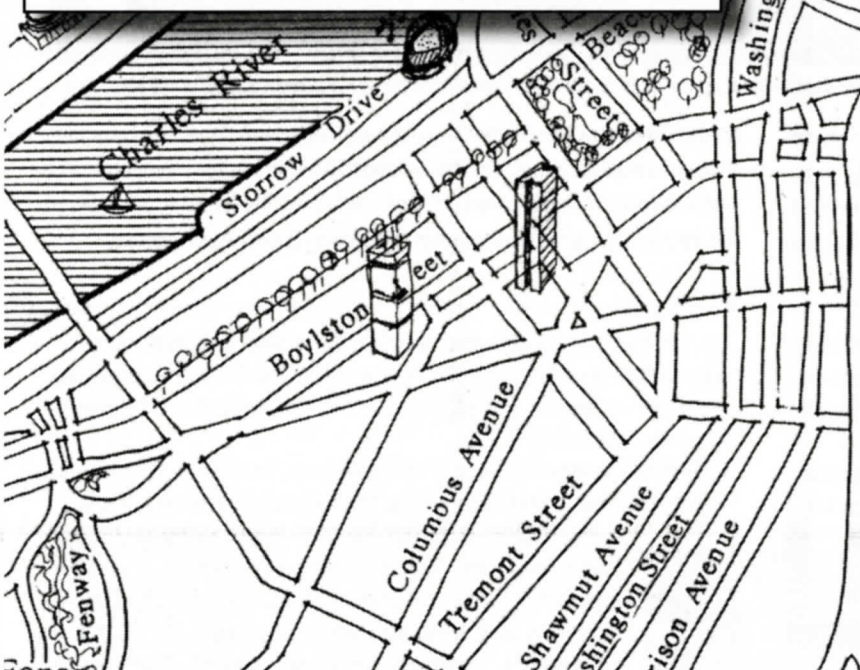
Fees are based on the assessed values of properties, \$1.10 per \$1,000 up to \$70 million, and 50¢ per \$1,000 above \$70 million. The expected annual revenue was about \$4 million with the expanded BID. However, several large property owners exercised the "opt out" provision of the BID plan and the revised revenue take is now about \$3 million per year. Saying the BID boundaries should not include their properties, property owners including Equity Office (five buildings), Tishman Speyer (One Federal St.), three McDonald's and Steve Belkin (133 Federal St., site of proposed 1,000-foot tower) declined to pay.



Boston Harbor Garage Saga – (adjacent to the New England Aquarium): Prudential Real Estate Investors and the Chiofaro Co. bought the garage in 2007 for \$153 million with plans to develop it by demolishing the garage and building two office-hotel-condominium towers 690 feet tall and 560 feet tall with 1.5 million s.f. and a density (FAR) greater than the John Hancock Tower. Zoning allows a maximum height of 155 feet.

After strong negative rulings by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, and Federal Aviation Administration, Prudential/Chiofaro reduced building heights to 615 feet and 470 feet. In 2009 the BRA commissioned the Greenway District Study that produced guidelines setting a 200-foot limit for the site. The BRA says the guidelines will be the basis for future zoning. The developers maintained that the 200-foot limit made developing the garage site infeasible.

However, several plans had previously been developed that involved demolishing only one-third of the garage and replacing it with a new building with 200-foot to 300-foot towers; these worked financially. Recently a Boston Globe column described a meeting with a Chiofaro Co. partner who revealed a plan to leave the garage intact and build up to 12 stories of residences above (within the 200-foot limit). Stay tuned!



Whatever Happened to the BRA Crossroads Initiative?

— It was 2005 when the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) announced with great fanfare the Crossroads Initiative, a program to rebuild 12 key streets that cross the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway. The goal of the program is to improve the pedestrian environment, enhance wayfinding, increase sidewalk activity, provide better traffic flow and create new opportunity for art and performance. The BRA said the 12 streets would be redesigned and rebuilt over a period of 7–10 years with the work being managed jointly by the BRA and Public Works Department. The first design contract was issued in 2005 and construction was expected to start in 2006. The BRA Crossroads Web site is hopelessly out of date—the last activity posted was in 2006.

The first crossroad designed was Broad Street, a little over 1,000 feet, and construction has just begun, five years after the design contract was issued. The \$3.7 million project involves narrowing the roadway from two lanes to one lane in each direction, widening the sidewalks, new street furniture, trees, plantings and lighting, and special pavement at a major intersection. Construction is expected to be done by fall 2011, with work stopping from January through March. Four more crossroads are currently in design—Beach, Summer, Congress and Causeway streets. Broad Street was funded using federal stimulus money; alternative sources of funding are being sought for the others.

The remaining crossroads—Hanover, State, Essex, Kneeland, New Chardon, Salem and Oliver streets—have not been designed and will roll out slowly over the coming

Bike Share Update – Although vendor proposals were due to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council on November 5, little has been said about who will be selected to provide the bike sharing system. Although MAPC will identify the most responsive vendor, it will not be the awarding entity—the vendor must establish separate contracts with any and all cities, towns and agencies interested in participating. A few requirements in the RFP:

- System to start with 61 stations/610 bikes minimum
- First 30 minutes use of bike free
- Hire local employees and contractors
- Develop a system to distribute helmets

MAPC received only two proposals: B-Cycle (operating in Denver and Chicago and more) and Alta Bike Share (in partnership with Public Bike Systems Co./BIXI, running the Montreal system). After requesting additional financial information the MAPC review committee was supposed to make a decision in early December, but nothing has been announced.

MBTA Silver Line Ridership – A recent Boston Globe article tried to describe how the expanded Silver Line service to So. Station was faring. The Globe reported that ridership on the Washington Street Silver Line was up 2,500 since the service was extended via Essex Street to So. Station. The Globe said the MBTA estimated the new and increased service would attract 2,600 new riders in two years and concluded that almost 2,500 in one year was pretty good.

In fact, the MBTA's Notice of Project Change in June 2009 describing the proposed service to So. Station estimated 1,400 riders would use the bus to So. Station plus another 1,200 riders would be attracted to increased service on Washington Street. MBTA counts show 814 people got off at So. Station and 676 boarded in Nov. 2010—about 1,400 riders—right on the money!

However, with about 60% of riders traveling in four peak hours, at most each 60-foot articulated bus running to So. Station (capacity 97 seated and standing) is carrying only about 35 riders. Just doing the math shows that off-peak ridership is really low, fewer than 40 passengers per hour, maybe 8 per 57-seat bus. Good thing the MBTA runs the smaller, 40-foot buses at night....

New Suffolk U. Academic Building – Suffolk University had its eyes on the former Metropolitan District Commission headquarters for over five years before coming up with a use and design acceptable to the community and the Mayor. Demolition of the former office building will begin soon to clear the site for a new eight-story, 112,000-s.f. academic building that will house the University's New England School of Art and Design. NESAD currently has fewer than 400 students.

Suffolk's first attempt to build a residence hall was killed by the Mayor in 2006, giving way to creative thinking about other less objectionable uses. The adjacent Roemer "Plaza," a concrete wasteland, will be revitalized as part of the project and retained as a public space. The \$68 million project is scheduled to be done in December 2012. Architect: Chan Krieger Sieniewicz.



Source: Chan Krieger Sieniewicz and Suffolk University



Food Market Planned for Artery Parcel

— With more meetings scheduled for the MassDOT Parcel 7 and 9 Advisory Committee to discuss possible uses, it appears the state has jumped the gun on Parcel 7 (site with vent building above Haymarket MBTA station) by issuing a Request For Proposals for a \$150,000 study to determine the optional design and management of a new public food market in the building which is empty except the parking garage on the upper floors. The report is due by April 1, 2011, and there are four bidders. After the consultant's report is issued, the state will hold public meetings and develop a financial plan. The state has committed \$10 million for building renovations. The goal is to open the market by summer 2012.

What's Up?

Prudential Exeter Apartments—Initially proposed in 2005, a high-rise apartment building on Exeter Street, part of the Prudential Center Master Plan, is moving to construction in 2011. Approved by the PruPAC advisors on the Prudential Center overall development, the 28-story, 187-unit development would be virtually the same height as the nearby Sheraton Hotel. At 311 feet, the Exeter apartment building would be the fourth tallest Prudential complex building and the eighth tallest Back Bay high-rise. Architect: Elkus Manfredi.

New Life for 25 Stuart St.—Hosteling International will soon begin construction of a new hostel at 25 Stuart St., near the Theater District and Chinatown. The hostel will replace the existing one in the Fenway, more than doubling its capacity from 205 beds to 450 beds. The 55,500-s.f. hostel will be the country's first LEED-certified hostel and will include a green roof and solar hot water heating, among other sustainable features. The hostel will occupy the six-story 1886 Dill Building—which is in the National Register of Historic Places—a few doors from Jacob Wirth restaurant.

The \$44 million project, funded with a variety of sources, is scheduled to be complete in spring 2012. Architect: Bergmeyer Associates and Stegman+Associates.

State Street MBTA Renovation—Part of upgrading the Blue Line to six-car trains and rehabilitating stations, work began on State station in 2004 with planned completion in 2007. In November 2009 the completion date was changed to fall 2010; it's now spring 2011. Costs have risen from \$38.4 million to \$52.4 million.

Unfortunately not only has the protracted work inconvenienced MBTA riders, but also the State/Congress Street intersection has been dug up and not restored, leaving dangerous pedestrian and traffic situations. Even some pavement markings on State Street would be an improvement.

Back Bay Commercial Guidelines—The Back Bay Architectural Commission recently unanimously approved commercial guidelines following more than three years of review by a six-person working group created by Mayor Menino. Established in 1966, the original District was a Residential District that was enlarged twice to include Newbury Street and the north side of Boylston Street.

The new Commercial Guidelines clearly spell out what businesses can and cannot do with signage, windows, etc. They will be especially helpful on Newbury Street buildings which have residential and commercial spaces, with many commercial spaces on upper levels. The guidelines also cover sustainability, outdoor seating and accessibility. The new Commercial Guidelines have not stopped the proliferation of sandwich boards and front-yard displays of goods. The new guidelines can be found at www.cityofboston.gov/Images_Documents/BBAC.

PEOPLE MOVERS

Ian Bowles resigned as secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) for the Commonwealth.

Jack Sullivan, from commissioner of DCR to secretary of EEA.

Jack Murray, DCR deputy commissioner of Park Operations, is interim DCR commissioner.

Bart Mitchell, from Mitchell Properties to The Community Builders. **Mossik Hacobian** stepped down Jan. 1 as president of Urban Edge Housing Corporation after 33 years in its employ.

Ray Porfilio, from TAMS/AECOM to Epstein Joslin Architects.

Ralph DeNisco, from McMahon Assoc. to Nelson\Nygaard.

Sandra Clarey, from MBTA to McMahon Assoc.

Michael Epp, from Elkus Manfredi Architects to Kleinfelder/SEA.

Karen Arpino, from Kleinfelder/SEA to Gilbane.

Tom Loughlin, from MassDOT Highway Division to BSC Group.

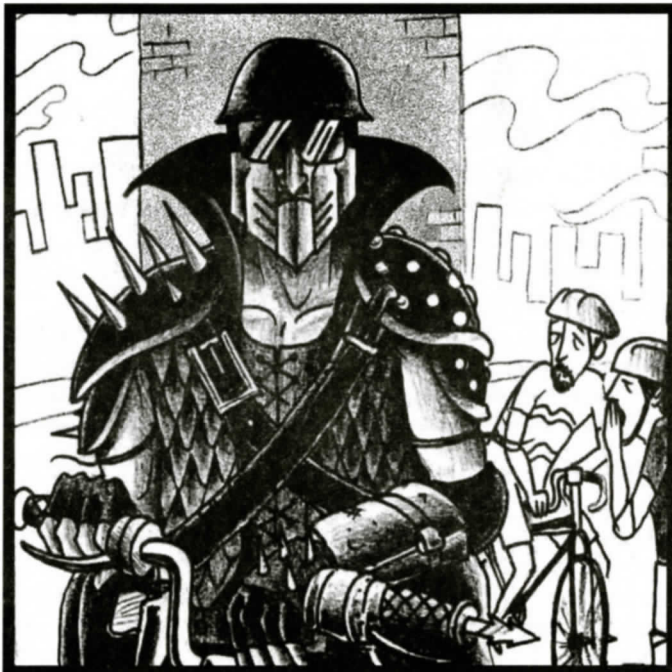
Welcome to The Boston Informer

The goal is simple: Provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The Boston Informer is published by ATC Information, Inc., five times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

The Boston Informer is available by subscription only. \$25.00 per year (cheap!). Questions? Telephone (617) 723-7030, fax (617) 437-1886 or e-mail: BostonInformer@cs.com. Check us out on the Web at www.bostoninformer.com!

The planned bike share program by law must offer helmets to all customers. Given Boston's reputation for scary cycling conditions, Boston's program might offer more...



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Billie Bicyclist says, "Bring on the Boston drivers!"

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You Were Asking

- Q. I heard Gov. Patrick signed legislation to honor the late George Sanborn, librarian at the State Transportation Library. How is Mr. Sanborn being honored?**
- A.** Gov. Patrick approved Ch. 353 of the Acts of 2010 to rename the Transportation Building library the "George M. Sanborn State Transportation Library and Resource Center." The bill was filed by Rep. Liz Malia (Boston). George Sanborn worked for 37 years as the MBTA librarian and reference librarian at the State Transportation Library. He died in 2008 at 77. No details have been released by MassDOT about the dedication ceremony.
- Q. A huge, long-vacant lot across from the Police Headquarters on Tremont Street in Lower Roxbury seems to be under construction. What's going on there?**
- A.** The Whittier Street Health Center is building a new five-story, 78,900-s.f. facility, on a sub-divided part of Parcel P-3, seven acres, on Tremont Street. The Boston Redevelopment Authority owns the land and is subsidizing the Center's rent. This parcel is part of the 1971 Campus High School Urban Renewal Project that built Madison Park High School and many housing units but has been dormant for decades. The architect is Domenech Hicks and Krockmalnic. Opening will be in early 2012.
- Q. I read that the Federal government (EPA, HUD, DOT) with the City is funding a design project to "green" Government Center. A team of planners and landscape architects has been selected to work on the redesign. Has it looked at the previous plans to fix Government Center? Will the new plan have the same fate?**
- A.** Probably. There are enough previous plans to fill a file cabinet. But this plan, with Utile Inc. as the lead, is the first to use the word "green."
- Q. Developers now are announcing plans to build apartments instead of condominiums or offices. How soon will it be before we have a glut of apartments and a shortage of condominiums?**
- A.** Probably about five years. Fortunately, they are mostly interchangeable.

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Boston Architectural College**

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